

October 16, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal  
Chairman  
Ways and Means Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady  
Ranking Member  
Ways and Means Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Pallone and Neal, and Ranking Members Walden and Brady:

On behalf of Families USA, Justice in Aging, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, Community Catalyst- four of the leading organizations on oral health, health care consumer, and senior health issues in the nation -we are writing to express our support for your legislation, H.R. 4650, the Medicare Dental Act of 2019, which amends title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of dental services under the Medicare program. We are pleased that oral health coverage in Medicare may be added to H.R. 3, the *Lower Drug Costs Now Act*. **On behalf of millions of seniors in need of better access to oral health care, we strongly urge the committees of jurisdiction to include H.R. 4650 in the prescription drug package.**

Two-thirds of the older adults and persons with disabilities in the Medicare program do not have oral health coverage. These individuals often live on fixed incomes and struggle to afford and receive oral health care services. When they forgo care, their overall health suffers, worsening both oral health conditions and other health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity for which consistent oral health care can help improve outcomes. As a result, this gap in oral coverage can lead to the Medicare program paying for costly, preventable medical problems that are the consequences of unmet oral health care needs. Expanding Medicare to include oral health coverage is an essential step to improving the health, wellbeing, and financial security of elderly and disabled persons as well as reducing avoidable health care costs. Medicare oral health coverage is also incredibly popular, with recent polls showing strong support from voters of both political parties, in all regions of the country, and of all ages.

Our organizations are particularly supportive of provisions in your bill that place oral health coverage within the existing Medicare Part B benefit. To provide older adults and persons with disabilities with the care they need, it is critical that the coverage of oral health services is treated the same way as other health services in the Medicare program. This approach is consistent with the growing recognition that oral health care should be more fully integrated into health care delivery, both in Medicare and more broadly in the health care system. It also ensures that this coverage will be available to all Medicare recipients that need it, not just those who can afford to pay out of pocket for care or additional premiums for insurance. Your legislation is a good beginning to achieving this important goal of full integration of oral health into Medicare's health coverage.

**H.R.4650 serves as an important opportunity for Congress to take a major step to improve the oral health, overall health and well-being, and financial security of seniors and people with disabilities in this country. We encourage you to prioritize Medicare oral health coverage as you continue to refine H.R. 3. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.**

Sincerely,

Families USA  
Justice in Aging  
Community Catalyst  
Center for Medicare Advocacy

Cc: The Honorable Robin Kelly